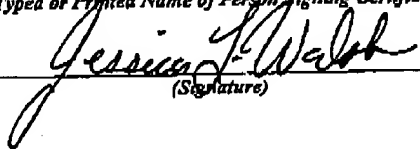| CERTIFICATE OF TRANSMISSION BY FACSIMILE (37 CFR 1.8)	Docket No.
Applicant(s): ERIC T. LAMBERT ET AL.	YOR920000560US1

Application No. 09/751,585	Filing Date 12/29/2000	Examiner B. JAKETIC	Group Art Unit 3627

Invention: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ELECTRONICALLY QUALIFYING SUPPLIER PARTS

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TRANSMITTAL OF APPEAL BRIEF (Large Entity)	Docket No. YOR920000560US1

In Re Application Of: ERIC T. LAMBERT ET AL.

Application No. 09/751,585	Filing Date 12/29/2000	Examiner B. JAKETIC	Customer No. 23413	Group Art Unit 3627	Confirmation No. 8383

Invention: **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ELECTRONICALLY QUALIFYING SUPPLIER PARTS**

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COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS:

Transmitted herewith in triplicate is the Appeal Brief in this application, with respect to the Notice of Appeal filed on 7/28/04

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPELLANT: ERIC T. LAMBERT ET AL)
) Group Art Unit:
) 3627
SERIAL NUMBER: 09/751,585)
) Before the Examiner:
FILED: December 29, 2000) Jaketic, B.
)
FOR: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR)
ELECTRONICALLY QUALIFYING)
SUPPLIER PARTS)

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APPEAL BRIEF

1. THE REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest in this appeal is International Business Machines, Inc. Ownership by International Business Machines, Inc. is established by assignment document recorded for this application on March 28, 2001 on Reel 011657, Frame 0247.

2. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Appellant knows of no related patent applications or patents under appeal or interference proceeding.

3. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Currently claims 40-71 are pending. All pending claims stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

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4. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

There have been no amendments filed subsequent to receipt of the final office action.

5. SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The following is a concise explanation of the invention. Reference to the specification and drawings is made pursuant to 37 CFR 1.192 and is not intended to limit the claims to the embodiments shown and described in the application.

Referring to Figures 1-5 of the application, the invention relates to a part qualification process and system that supports an environment for collaboratively driving part qualification processes by providing common part qualification plan templates (Fig. 3) across commodity types and by providing a common repository (Fig. 1, databases 120; Fig. 2) for part qualification data that is stored in a variety of locations. Suppliers (Fig. 1, system 150) have access to the system in order to review qualification data related to their own products.

The part qualification system provides a common business process and a shared data repository (Fig. 1, databases 120) that can be utilized by all personnel involved in qualification decisions. The part qualification system runs on an application server (Fig. 1, 106) that is accessible via user system workstations (Fig. 1, at 114, 130, 154) connected to the Internet, to extranet (Fig. 1, 140), or to a host system intranet (Fig. 1, LAN 112). This gives any participant (Fig. 1, workstations 114, 130, 154) in the part qualification process, with the proper authority, the ability to view and update data and to communicate electronically to any other participant in the process.

Archives database (Fig. 2, 202) stores part qualification plans (Fig. 5) that are no longer active. Other databases are referenced by the "location" or "status" field of the part qualification plan (Fig. 5) for a particular supplier part. These include technology surveys database (Fig. 2, 204), data specific to memory qualification (Fig. 2, database 206), data specific to memory commodities (Fig. 2, database 208), quality information data common to all commodities (Fig. 2, database 210), and system testing data specific to a particular corporate division (Fig. 2, database 212). Quality information network database (Fig. 2, 210) includes audit data and provides standardized audit

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forms, reports, and related auditing procedures and information for use by an organization (Fig. 1, 102) and stores the information in a centralized location (Fig. 1, databases 120) for access by the organization (Fig. 1, 102).

A database (Fig. 2, 214) contains an index relating part numbers established by the organization 102 to supplier part numbers along with a title of the part that is referenced by the software application. A database (Fig. 2, 216) houses part information used by the organization (Fig. 1, 102). Information is extracted nightly from the database (Fig. 2, 216) and stored in the database (Fig. 2, 214) for use by the part qualification system. Part numbers and technology data from the organization (Fig. 1, 102) can now be merged or associated with part numbers and data from the database (Fig. 2, 216) to provide a comprehensive, up-to-date library of part information.

6.   ISSUES

There are four issues on appeal: (1) whether the Examiner's rejection of claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,109,337 to Ferriter et al. ("Ferriter") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,493,685 to Ensel et al. ("Ensel") is improper; (2) whether the Examiner's rejection of claims 41 and 63 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40 and 62, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,765,138 to Aycock et al. ("Aycock") is improper; (3) whether the Examiner's rejection of claims 42-44 and 64-66 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40 and 62, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,765,138 to Aycock is improper; and (4) whether the Examiner's rejection of claims 51-56 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claim 50, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,765,138 to Aycock is improper.

7.   GROUPING OF CLAIMS

There are four groups of claims. Claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 comprise the first group, which stand or fall together, under the Examiner's contested rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter in view of Ensel. Claims 41 and 63 comprise the second group, which stand or fall together,

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under the Examiner's contested rejection of claims 41-44, 51-56, and 63-66 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40, 50, and 62, and further in view of Aycock. Claims 42-44 and 64-66 comprise the third group, which stand or fall together, under the Examiner's contested rejection of claims 41-44, 51-56, and 63-66 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40, 50, and 62, and further in view of Aycock. Claims 51-56 comprise the fourth group, which stand or fall together, under the Examiner's contested rejection of claims 41-44, 51-56, and 63-66 under U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40, 50, and 62, and further in view of Aycock.

8.   ARGUMENT

   A.   **Claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).**

Under the first grouping of claims, the Examiner improperly rejected claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter in view of Ensel. For an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art; and that the prior art relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970); *Amgen v. Chugai Pharmaceuticals Co.*, 927 U.S.P.Q.2d, 1016, 1023 (Fed. Cir. 1996).

The issue regarding claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 is whether all of the elements contained in these claims are disclosed by the prior art.

Claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71 include limitations not taught or suggested by Ferriter or Ensel, either alone or in combination.

Neither Ferriter nor Ensel teach or suggest all of the elements set forth in claims 40, 45-50, 57-62, and 67-71. Claims 40 and 62 recite, respectively, a method

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and storage medium for facilitating parts qualification functions in a communications network environment comprising creating a commodity template for a commodity associated with a supplier part comprising entering requirements data for qualifying the commodity; and selecting at least one database in a part qualification repository for storing the requirements data, wherein the part qualification repository comprises a parts database, a technology survey database, a quality information network database, an archives database, and a system testing database. Appellants' claims 40 and 62 also recite assigning a default viewing tool for qualifying the commodity based upon the database selected and establishing access restrictions for restricting and authorizing viewing and editing capabilities associated with the commodity template, wherein the requirements data stored in the databases are shared among the databases.

Contrary to the Examiner's assertions, Ferriter does not recite the above features. Specifically, Ferriter does not recite creating a commodity template for a commodity associated with a supplier part comprising entering requirements data for qualifying the commodity. Rather Ferriter recites a top-down design approach wherein a sketch sheet is used to design a product in which a user keys in part descriptions (col. 2, lines 34-37). The system "automatically draws a hierarchical tree structure" using the descriptive information (col. 2, lines 37-38, FIG. 2). The descriptive information entered by the designer includes a product name, its major components (individually entered by the user), followed by entering subcomponents (col. 4, lines 11-43). The system "decomposes the product structure into a parts list 18, and quantity of each part as well as cost per part are pulled from the manufacturing information table in the relational database associated with each item. The cost estimating function then multiplies each part on the list by quantity of that part, then by cost of that part. The results for the parts list are added. The labor estimate is multiplied by the standard hourly labor and burden rate. The results of the parts list multiplication and the labor multiplication are added, and the result is output to the user" (col. 5, lines 1-11). Thus, Ferriter does not even remotely teach or suggest qualifying supplier parts, but rather teaches *a design tool that extracts pricing and manufacturing information associated with components of a design created by a user which gives the designer a way to anticipate costs and time factors associated*

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with a product's manufacture (emphasis added).

Referring to Figure 1 in the Ferriter reference, the Examiner asserts that database (10) teaches a part qualification repository for storing requirements data and comprising a parts database. The Appellants strongly disagree. The database (10) recited in the Ferriter reference is a relational database that captures *a product structure that is entered by a user into a table* (col. 4, lines 13-15) (emphasis added). Moreover, the parts database of the Appellants' claims 40 and 62 receives *information from a commercial parts database* (emphasis added). Thus, even if the parts database of the Appellants' claims 40 and 62 could be considered equal to the database (10) of the Ferriter reference, nowhere in the Ferriter reference does it teach or suggest "receiving information from a commercial parts database." In addition, the part qualification repository of the Appellants' claims 40 and 62 recite a technology survey database, a quality information network database, an archives database, and a system testing database. None of these features are recited in the Ferriter reference. As Ferriter does not teach or recite qualifying parts, neither the requirements data nor the databases recited in the Appellants' claims 40 and 62, which are used to qualify parts, are not taught or suggested by Ferriter.

The Examiner indicated that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include a technology survey database, a quality information network database, an archives database, and a system testing database with the design tool of the Ferriter reference as they 'would be logical repositories for such information.' The Appellants respectfully disagree. The Examiner has taken Official Notice that such elements are common and well known in the art. The Appellant respectfully disagrees and submits that the Examiner's use of Official Notice in this circumstance is improper. MPEP § 2144.03 defines when it is proper to use Official Notice. In particular, the MPEP states "Official notice unsupported by documentary evidence should only be taken by the examiner where the facts asserted to be well-known, or to be common knowledge in the art are capable of instant and unquestionable demonstration as being well-known." The MPEP also states "It would not be appropriate for the examiner to take official notice of facts without citing a prior art reference where the facts asserted to be well known are not capable of instant and

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unquestionable demonstration as being well-known." The MPEP gives as an example specific knowledge of the art. In this case, the limitations of a part qualification repository comprising a technology survey database, a quality information network database, an archives database, and a system testing database for use in qualifying parts in a communications network environment are not capable of instant and unquestionable demonstration as being well-known. Appellant asserts that it is improper to rely on Official Notice for the limitations recited in claims 40 and 62.

Also, Ferriter does not teach or suggest assigning a default viewing tool for qualifying the commodity based upon the database selected as indicated by the Examiner. Figures 2-4 of the Ferriter reference simply illustrate computer screen displays of hierarchical product structures designed by a user. Neither Ferriter nor Ensel teach the step of sharing requirements information with multiple databases. The Ensel reference is directed to a billing and payment application. Customer bills and resulting payments are processed and managed using this billing and payment application. Appellants' claims 40 and 62 recite sharing 'requirements' data among databases for qualifying parts. Accordingly, the Appellants submit that the Ensel reference is misapplied to the instant claims. Furthermore, neither Ferriter nor Ensel recite establishing access restrictions as provided in Appellants' claims 40 and 62.

As not all of the elements set forth in claims 40 and 62 are taught by Ferriter and Ensel either alone or in combination, the rejection regarding claims 40 and 62 is improper. Appellants' claim 50 recites a system for facilitating parts qualification activities in a communication network environment. The Appellants submit that claim 50 is patentable over Ferriter in view of Ensel for at least the reasons described above with respect to claims 40 and 62. Claims 41-49 depend from claim 40 and, thus, include all of the limitations of claim 40. Claims 51-61 depend from claim 50 and, thus, include all of the limitations of claim 50. Claims 63-71 depend from 62 and, thus, include all of the limitations of claim 62. As explained above, neither Ferriter nor Ensel teach or suggest all of the limitations of claims 40, 50, and 62. As not all of the elements set forth in claims 40, 50, and 62 are taught by the cited prior art references either along or in combination, neither these references teach all of the elements set forth in claims 41-49, 51-61, and 63-71. Accordingly, Appellants respectfully submit that the rejection of

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claims 41-49, 51-61, and 63-71 is improper.

B.   Claims 41 and 63 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Under the second grouping of claims, the Examiner improperly rejected claims 41 and 63 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40 and 62, and further in view of Aycock. As stated previously, for an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art; and that the prior art relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970); *Amgen v. Chugai Pharmaceuticals Co.*, 927 U.S.P.Q.2d, 1016, 1023 (Fed. Cir. 1996). The issue regarding claims 41 and 63 is whether all of the elements contained in these claims are disclosed by the prior art.

Claim 41 depends from claim 40. Therefore, claim 41 includes all of the limitations set forth in claim 40. Claim 63 depends from claim 62. Therefore, claim 63 includes all of the limitations set forth in claim 62. As explained above, Ferriter and Ensel do not teach or suggest all of the limitations of claims 40 and 62. Accordingly, the Appellants submit that the rejections of claims 41 and 63 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper.

Notwithstanding, with respect to Appellants' claims 41 and 63, the Examiner states that Aycock teaches a method of qualifying parts comprising selecting entities to perform the tasks of providing parts based on maturity requirements (cols. 6 and 7) and further asserts that it is inherent that the maturity requirements include due dates. The Examiner contends that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to employ the teachings of Aycock with the combination of Ferriter and Ensel to select a supplier that can meet the users needs.

The Appellants submit that Aycock qualifies suppliers by sending vendor requirements to suppliers in the form of maturity questions (col. 5, lines 44-65, col. 6,

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lines 21-33 and lines 55-59). According to Aycock, qualifying a supplier involves assigning a weight to these requirements in accordance with their importance, and scaling the responses received from suppliers to determine a supplier maturity level (col. 6, lines 18-27 and lines 59-67). The feedback from suppliers are validated by the entity doing the qualifying by performing an onsite evaluation of the supplier and comparing the results of the evaluation against the supplier responses (col. 3, lines 36-39). The qualification of the Appellants invention, on the other hand, qualifies technologies and supplier parts according to a related commodity type, which is not taught or suggested by Aycock. Accordingly, not all of the elements provided in claims 41 and 63 are taught or suggested by Ferriter, Ensel, and Aycock, either alone or in combination. The Appellants, therefore submit that the rejection of claims 41 and 63 is improper.

C.   Claims 42-44 and 64-66 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Under the third grouping of claims, the Examiner improperly rejected claims 42-44 and 64-66 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claims 40 and 62, and further in view of Aycock. This grouping of claims is proper as the claims contain distinguishing features that are patentable apart from the independent base claims from which they depend. As stated previously, for an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art, and that the prior art relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970); *Amgen v. Chugai Pharmaceuticals Co.*, 927 U.S.P.Q.2d, 1016, 1023 (Fed. Cir. 1996). The issue regarding claims 42-44 and 64-66 is whether all of the elements contained in these claims are disclosed by the prior art.

Claims 42-44 depend from claim 40. Therefore, claims 42-44 include all of the limitations set forth in claim 40. Claims 64-66 depend from claim 62. Therefore, claims 64-66 include all of the limitations set forth in claim 62. As explained above,

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Ferriter and Ensel do not teach or suggest all of the limitations of claims 40 and 62. Accordingly, the Appellants submit that the rejection of claims 42-44 and 64-66 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper.

D.   Claims 51-56 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Under the fourth grouping of claims, the Examiner improperly rejected claims 51-56 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Ferriter and Ensel as applied to claim 50, and further in view of Aycock. This grouping of claims is proper as the claims contain distinguishing features that are patentable apart from the independent base claims from which they depend. As stated previously, for an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art; and that the prior art relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970); *Amgen v. Chugai Pharmaceuticals Co.*, 927 U.S.P.Q.2d, 1016, 1023 (Fed. Cir. 1996). The issue regarding claims 51-56 is whether all of the elements contained in these claims are disclosed by the prior art.
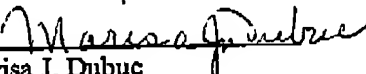
Claims 51-56 depend from claim 50. Therefore, claims 51-56 include all of the limitations set forth in claim 50. As explained above, Ferriter and Ensel do not teach or suggest all of the limitations of claim 50. Accordingly, the Appellants submit that the rejection of claims 51-56 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is improper.

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E.   Conclusion

For the reasons cited above, Appellants respectfully submit that the rejections are improper and request reversal of the outstanding rejections. If there are any additional charges with respect to this Appeal, or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 50-0510 maintained by Appellants' assignee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: September 30, 2004

APPENDIX A

Appealed Claims

Claim 40. A method for facilitating part qualification functions in a communications network environment, comprising:

creating a commodity template for a commodity, said commodity associated with a supplier part, comprising:

entering requirements data for qualifying said commodity;

selecting at least one database in a part qualification repository for storing said requirements data, said part qualification repository comprising:

a parts database receiving information from a commercial parts database;

a technology survey database;

a quality information network database;

an archives database; and

a system testing database;

assigning a default viewing tool for qualifying said commodity based upon said at least one database selected;

establishing access restrictions operable for restricting and authorizing viewing and editing capabilities associated with said commodity template;

wherein said requirements data stored in databases associated with said part qualification repository are shared among said databases.

Claim 41. The method of claim 40, wherein said part qualification plan template comprises:

requirements data operable for qualifying said commodity;

at least one proposed database in said part qualification repository for storing said requirements data;

an assigned default viewing tool for accessing said requirements data, said assigned default viewing tool selectable based on said at least one proposed database;

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a text message field, said text message field operable for explaining

qualification data and for selecting a reference document for viewing;

an access permissions structure; and

a plan framework comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said plurality of tasks; and

due dates associated with said plurality of tasks;

wherein said qualification data is received from at least one of:

a development entity;

a supplier;

at least one of said databases associated with said part

qualification repository; and

a technology engineer.

Claim 42. The method of claim 40, further comprising establishing a detailed

qualification plan via said part qualification plan template, comprising:

entering a technology qualification name associated with said commodity;

receiving a list of suppliers associated with said technology qualification

name;

selecting a supplier from said list; and

entering qualification data for said detailed qualification plan, said

qualification data comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said detailed qualification plan;

due dates associated with said detailed qualification plan; and

status information associated with said detailed qualification plan.

Claim 43. The method of claim 42, further comprising:

updating said detailed qualification plan with data specific to said supplier part;

analyzing said data, comprising:

selecting and viewing a detailed qualification plan associated with a supplier for a specified technology;

running reports against detailed qualification plans for suppliers associated with said specified technology and viewing said reports;

qualifying said supplier part based on said analyzing said data;

wherein said updating said detailed qualification plan

comprises

obtaining said data specific to said supplier part from at least one of:

a supplier;

at least one of said databases associated with said part qualification repository; and

a technology engineer.

Claim 44. The method of claim 42, further comprising:

viewing a status screen for a supplier part, said status screen comprising:

a description of qualification data associated with said supplier part;

a test message related to said supplier part qualification data;

a status box indicating approval status;

a recommended repository for said qualification data; and

a description of said supplier part, said description referencing said supplier part by supplier part name and by a part name used by an enterprise that is qualifying said supplier part.

Claim 45. The method of claim 40, wherein said parts database stores a parts index, said parts index relating part numbers established by an enterprise qualifying a supplier part to part numbers used by a supplier being qualified.

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Claim 46. The method of claim 40, wherein said technology survey database stores information relating to at least one new technology, said information provided by at least one of:

      a development individual for an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers;

      an engineering individual for said enterprise that is qualifying suppliers; and

      an existing or prospective supplier associated with said at least one new technology.

Claim 47. The method of claim 40, wherein said quality information network database stores:

      audit data related to a supplier;

      standardized audit forms;

      audit reports; and

      auditing procedures.

Claim 48. The method of claim 40, wherein said archives database stores part qualification plans that are no longer active.

Claim 49. The method of claim 40, wherein said system testing database stores results of system testing specific to a particular corporate division of an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers.

Claim 50. A system for facilitating part qualification functions in a communications network environment, comprising:

      a host system including a web server, an applications server, and a database server;

      a part qualification repository in communication with said host system, said part qualification repository storing:

            a parts database receiving information extracted from a commercial parts database;

            a technology survey database;

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a quality information network database;

an archives database; and

a system testing database; and

at least one workstation in communication with said host system; and

a parts qualification software executing on said host system;

a part qualification plan template created by said parts qualification software,

said part qualification plan template associated with a commodity;

wherein said part qualification plan template comprises:

requirements data operable for qualifying said commodity;

at least one proposed database in said part qualification

repository for storing said requirements data;

an assigned default viewing tool for accessing said

requirements

data, said assigned default viewing tool selectable based on said at least one proposed

database;

a text message field, said text message field operable for

explaining qualification data and for selecting a reference document for viewing; and

an access permissions structure.

Claim 51. The system of claim 50 wherein said part qualification plan template

further comprises a plan framework comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said plurality of tasks; and

due dates associated with said plurality of tasks.

Claim 52. The system of claim 50, wherein said qualification data is received from at

least one of:

a supplier;

at least one of said databases associated with said part qualification repository;

and

a technology engineer.

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Claim 53. The system of claim 50, further comprising a detailed qualification plan created via said part qualification plan template, comprising:

a technology qualification name associated with said commodity;

a supplier associated with said technology qualification name; and

qualification data for said detailed qualification plan, said qualification data comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said detailed qualification plan;

due dates associated with said detailed qualification plan; and

status information associated with said detailed qualification plan.

Claim 54. The system of claim 50, further comprising a status screen associated with a supplier part, said status screen comprising:

a description of qualification data associated with said supplier part;

a test message related to said supplier part qualification data;

a status box indicating approval status;

a recommended repository for said qualification data; and

a description of said supplier part, said description referencing said supplier part by supplier part name and by a part name used by an enterprise that is qualifying said supplier part.

Claim 55. The system of claim 54, wherein said text message is viewable by at least one of:

a document link; and

a hypertext link.

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Claim 56. The system of claim 54, wherein said text message includes at least one of:

a file name; and

a comment.

Claim 57. The system of claim 50, wherein said parts database stores a parts index, said parts index relating part numbers established by an enterprise qualifying a supplier part to part numbers used by a supplier being qualified.

Claim 58. The system of claim 50, wherein said technology survey database stores information relating to at least one new technology, said information provided by at least one of:

a development individual for an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers;

an engineering individual for said enterprise that is qualifying suppliers; and

an existing or prospective supplier associated with said at least one new

technology.

Claim 59. The system of claim 50, wherein said quality information network database stores:

audit data related to a supplier;

standardized audit forms;

audit reports; and

auditing procedures.

Claim 60. The system of claim 50, wherein said archives database stores part qualification plans that are no longer active.

Claim 61. The system of claim 50, wherein said system testing database stores results of system testing specific to a particular corporate division of an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers.

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Claim 62. A storage medium encoded with machine readable computer program code for facilitating part qualification functions in a communications network environment, the storage medium including instructions for causing a computer to implement a method comprising:

creating a commodity template for a commodity, said commodity associated with a supplier part, comprising:

entering requirements data for qualifying said commodity;

selecting at least one database in a part qualification repository for storing said requirements data, said part qualification repository comprising:

a parts database receiving information from a commercial parts database;

a technology survey database;

a quality information network database;

an archives database; and

a system testing database;

assigning a default viewing tool for qualifying said commodity based upon said at least one database selected;

establishing access restrictions operable for restricting and authorizing viewing and editing capabilities associated with said commodity template;

wherein said requirements data stored in databases associated with said part qualification repository are shared among said databases.

Claim 63. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said part qualification plan template comprises:

requirements data operable for qualifying said commodity;

at least one proposed database in said part qualification repository for storing said requirements data;

an assigned default viewing tool for accessing said requirements data, said assigned default viewing tool selectable based on said at least one proposed database;

a text message field, said text message field operable for explaining qualification data and for selecting a reference document for viewing;

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an access permissions structure; and

a plan framework comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said plurality of tasks; and

due dates associated with said plurality of tasks;

wherein said qualification data is received from at least one of:

a development entity;

a supplier;

at least one of said databases associated with said part

qualification repository; and

a technology engineer.

Claim 64. The storage medium of claim 62, further comprising instructions for

causing said computer to implement:

establishing a detailed qualification plan via said part qualification plan

template, comprising:

entering a technology qualification name associated with said

commodity;

receiving a list of suppliers associated with said technology

qualification name;

selecting a supplier from said list; and

entering qualification data for said detailed qualification plan, said

qualification data comprising:

a plurality of tasks;

individual or entity responsible for said detailed qualification

plan;

due dates associated with said detailed qualification plan; and

status information associated with said detailed qualification

plan.

Claim 65. The storage medium of claim 63, further comprising instructions for

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causing said computer to implement:

updating said detailed qualification plan with data specific to said supplier part;

analyzing said data, comprising:

selecting and viewing a detailed qualification plan associated with a supplier for a specified technology;

running reports against detailed qualification plans for suppliers associated with said specified technology and viewing said reports;

qualifying said supplier part based on said analyzing said data;

wherein said updating said detailed qualification plan comprises

obtaining said data specific to said supplier part from at least one of:

a supplier;

at least one of said databases associated with said part qualification repository; and

a technology engineer.

Claim 66. The storage medium of claim 64, further comprising instructions for causing said computer to implement:

viewing a status screen for a supplier part, said status screen comprising:

a description of qualification data associated with said supplier part;

a test message related to said supplier part qualification data;

a status box indicating approval status;

a recommended repository for said qualification data; and

a description of said supplier part, said description referencing said supplier part by supplier part name and by a part name used by an enterprise that is qualifying said supplier part.

Claim 67. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said parts database stores a parts index, said parts index relating part numbers established by an enterprise qualifying a supplier part to part numbers used by a supplier being qualified.

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Claim 68. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said technology survey database stores information relating to at least one new technology, said information provided by at least one of:

a development individual for an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers;

an engineering individual for said enterprise that is qualifying suppliers; and

an existing or prospective supplier associated with said at least one new technology.

Claim 69. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said quality information network database stores:

audit data related to a supplier;

standardized audit forms;

audit reports; and

auditing procedures.

Claim 70. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said archives database stores part qualification plans that are no longer active.

Claim 71. The storage medium of claim 62, wherein said system testing database stores results of system testing specific to a particular corporate division of an enterprise that is qualifying suppliers.

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